

The wisdom in Australian musician Paul Kelly's song "*Be careful what you pray for You just might get it...You might regret it*" could well relate to today's reading from St James "*when you do pray and do not receive, it is because you prayed wrongly, wanting to indulge your passions*" Jas 4:3. Jesus told us often that we should come to the Father and ask Him for His gifts. (Mt 7:7-8) But in our world of busy schedules it's easy to get caught up in the hectic pace of life, forgetting that spending time with God in prayerful reflection offers necessary respite from busyness. Maybe we need review how we might better make prayer a regular part of our daily life?



James wisely reminds us that prayer rises up from within the human heart, from the psyche of the soul, so we ought ask ourselves truthfully are these motions rising from light or from darkness ~ "*if at heart you have the bitterness of jealousy, or selfish ambition, do not be boastful or hide the truth with lies; this is not the wisdom that comes from above, but earthly, human and devilish*" Jas 3:14-15. (These two verses immediately precede today's reading.) True wisdom transforms the mind and heart and is manifest through a pure and peaceable life 3:17. It is a divine gift that comes down from the Father above 1:5. False wisdom, on the other hand, is rooted in the pride ingrained in our fallen human nature. Clearly, to think of truth and wisdom only in earthly terms is something that is really false and unspiritual. Prayer for the satisfaction of our disordered attachments will go unheeded since God responds to those petitions that lead to an increase of virtue and holiness. (CCC 2734-2737)

Conflicts in life are inevitable but we must not allow them to tear us apart. The root of most of such conflicts is selfish ambition. He asks us "*Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Is it not precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves? You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. It is because you do not pray that you do not receive...*" Jas 4:1-2. How many families, marriages, friendships, communities, and nations have been destroyed because of selfish ambitions or desires!

True wisdom is humble, merciful, serene, and sincere. Those who claim to be wise but are covetous and strive for power possess at best a worldly wisdom, which is incapable of appreciating the transcendence of God through the events and circumstances of everyday life. (CCC 36, 216, 1954, 1978-1986) Maybe we ought to thank God that sometimes our prayers are not answered! Parents know what is right for their little children, do they not? They give what the children need, not necessarily what they want. In today's Gospel we see that some disciples, on their way to Capernaum, were getting too ambitious for their own good (and everyone else's) Mk 9:33-34. Jesus has to correct them into seeing that being the greatest involves being a servant of all in humility, purity of intention, and service. No lofty honours and worldly power here! They need be as a child. (CCC 1825)

It is clear that our real need is for the wisdom from above with its fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal 5:22-23) These are the fruits that we want to bear and need be the ultimate goal of our prayer. As Therese of Lisieux succinctly put it ~ *My God will be my Great Reward. I don't desire to possess other goods. I want to be set on fire with his Love. I want to see Him, to unite myself to Him forever. That is my Heaven. . . that is my destiny: Living on Love!*

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